

Minutes for RBAC Meeting: August 4, 2021

7:00 – 9:00 pm, virtual Webex meeting

In attendance online: Wendy Aaronson, Steve Andruski, Ben Anstrom, Olivia Bobrowsky, Nancy Breen, Sophie Chan-Wood, Jake Jakubek, Bill Michie, Famarz Mokhtari, Carl Petersen, Mark Pierzchala, Jonathan Solomon, and Dave Stinchcomb,

Nancy started the meeting at 7:02 pm with introductions.

(1) Famarz provided the **City Update** and announced a new bicycle/pedestrian coordinator has been hired and will start on August 23. Bryan Barnett-Woods comes from the Prince George County's planning department and worked on their Vision Zero initiative, so he will be well qualified in Rockville.

He also said City staff will be working on alternative solutions to the **900 Rockville Pike** project. They will present to RBAC and RPAC before presenting to Mayor & City Council.

The **Maryland Ave** road diet plans with staff recommendations has been submitted to City Manager. If need be it will be submitted to Mayor & City Council with possible implementation in September.

Fortune Terrace (between Montrose and Twinbrook) will be improved with bike lanes and buffered sidewalks on both sides.

Baltimore Road closed on June 28. Construction on sidewalks and gutters have started.

There is a new senior center on **Gude Drive** between Rt-355 and Watkins Pond Blvd so a new sidewalk will be installed on the north side. The south side of this road section is the Carl Henn Millennium Trail.

A new sidewalk will be installed on **Potomac Valley** between Great Falls and Newmark Commons.

The 2014 Montgomery County Bikeway Planning Guidance was sent to the bike/ped coordinator for review.

(<http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2014/documents/BicyclePlanningGuidance.pdf>)

The document could help planners and designers establish standards for cycling in Rockville and serve unmet travel demand for cycling.

Concerns for tree and shrub trimming can be sent to the bike/ped coordinator for review and then forwarded to Parks & Recreation Dept to maintain. Regular maintenance turnaround time is about 2 to 3 weeks.

(2) Carl reported the **Tuesday night rides** have been going well with no rain cancellations so far and averaging about 35 riders each ride. The **Carl Henn Millennium Trail** ride will be on August 15 with the start at Wootton High School. Carl volunteered to lead; Jake and Wendy can help.

Nancy will reach out to Carol Henn and Mark Pierzchala regarding the **Carl Henn Memorial Ride** on Sunday, September 19 which will start at the Thomas Farm Community Center. Carl will lead; Jake, Jonathan and Nancy will help.

Carl will lead a ride to the Rockville Car Show in October and will post on meetup.com

(3) Ben Anstrom from REDI (Rockville Economic Development Inc) introduced the rebrand of East Gude from Rockville Pike to Norbeck. He wanted to offer a group ride the weekend of September 10 to connect this “**Rock East**” area to Rockville Town Center or Lakes Frank and Needwood. The start and end would be at True Respite as they can provide beverages afterwards. Sophie will work on a route based on businesses to highlight.

(4) Jake sent a letter to the Mayor & City Council supporting the **Maryland Avenue** road diet. He suggested reducing speed and painting bike lanes a noticeable color. Faramarz suggested sending this letter and copying Emad and the City Manager as well. (see attached)

(5) Nancy drafted a letter to Emad regarding the **900 Rockville Pike** project. Concerns were that a shared 10-foot lane/trail is not consistent with the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan and that this would set a precedent of violating the plan. (see attached)

A frontage road to allow for BRT along **460 Hungerford** will be presented to developer. Cycletracks are a part of the Rockville Master Plan. In the interim a 10-foot shared-use trail will be built by the developer. Faramarz will share the cross-sections of these configurations from the engineer. (see attached)

(6) Jonathan will reach out to the new leadership of the Tree House regarding the **2022 Tour de Cookie** and hope to have an update by the next RBAC meeting.

(7) Mark provided a **Council update** and said this Monday was the last meeting until September. Future meeting will continue to be virtual.

The 2040 Master Plan was approved but was a very long 400-page+ document. It should have been shorter without the non-land use items proposed by the Planning Commission.

He also said that piece-meal bike lanes/cycle tracks will not happen unless a major project like BRT comes to fruition which he doubts.

(8) Wendy asked everyone who disapproves the widening of I-270 to send an email. A model letter that can be sent to the State can be found at:

<https://secure.everyaction.com/fXiW7Mt1ZUWfRRpl5OxkiA2?emci=341aee70-b7e9-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=163d5a50-58ea-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=8307567>

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Sophie Chan-Wood

Dear Mayor Newton and City Council,

My name is Jake Jakubek and I live at 319 Grandin Ave in Croydon Park. I am writing today in my capacity as a volunteer for the Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee to voice support for the proposed Maryland Avenue Road Diet. The changes to the road illustrated in the city's drawings will make the road safer for all users. People driving will have more a more predictable environment traveling east by virtue of the one lane of traffic in each direction, people cycling will have a new bike lane that will open up the Town Center to people in that part of our city, and people walking will have a buffer between themselves and auto traffic and will benefit from slower vehicular traffic on Maryland Avenue and fewer bikes on the sidewalk. Residents will appreciate the traffic calming effects of the new bike lanes.

RBAC did have a few suggestions that we feel refine the project and will improve the outcome.

One thing RBAC would like to see done on Maryland Avenue as part of this project is that the speed limit be lowered by 5mph to 10mph. This would make the street more comfortable for people walking and for people riding in the bike lane. Lowered speed limits are also safer for all users.

Another request RBAC has is to paint the bike lanes green to make them visible. Having the contrast between the bike lane and the motor vehicle lane will allow people driving to better see the bike lane.

The committee feels that these requests would be a significant improvement to the project and improve road conditions for all of the people using Maryland Avenue.

Thank you for your time.

Jake Jakubek

August 5, 2021

Honorable Mayor and Council Members,

The Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee (RBAC) is writing to strongly support the Maryland Avenue Road Diet proposed by Rockville City staff. Changes to the road illustrated in the city's drawings will improve safety for all users. Drivers will have a slower, more predictable environment traveling east with a single lane of traffic in each direction, cyclists will have a new bike lane that will connect west Rockville to Town Center, and pedestrians will have a buffer between themselves and auto traffic. Everyone will benefit from slower vehicular traffic on Maryland Avenue and fewer bikes on the sidewalk. Residents will appreciate the traffic calming effects of the new bike lanes.

RBAC has two suggestions to refine the project that we believe will improve the outcome.

1. Lower the speed limit by 5mph to 10mph on Maryland Avenue. This would make the street more comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists riding in the bike lane. Lowered speed limits also reduce vehicular crashes and make roads safer for all users.
2. Paint the bike lanes green to increase their visibility. Greater contrast between the bike lane and the motor vehicle lane will improve bike lane visibility for drivers. These are prevalent in other parts of Montgomery County (Silver Spring, White Flint), DC, and Alexandria, VA. The paint should be textured to ensure good traction even during rain.

RBAC feels the project is sound and that these additions to it would further improve the road conditions for everyone using Maryland Avenue.

Thanks for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Nancy
Nancy Breen, Chair
Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee
<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/index.aspx?NID=319>

Draft letter from RBAC (and RPAC) concerning Rockville Pike Plan Implementation

RBAC and BPAC are concerned that the City of Rockville is not moving forward consistently with the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan (RPNP) design recommendations for the long-term transportation and beautification of the city.

The RPNP was adopted August 1, 2016. A key focus of the plan was to encourage walking and cycling along Rockville's busiest corridor. Rockville Pike is the only continuous north-south route in Rockville. The Pike is Rockville's main shopping area, and it serves as the main shopping hub for all of Montgomery County's one million residents. Rockville Pike is a Maryland State Road (MD355) and outside the jurisdiction of Rockville City. The RPNP was developed to allow Rockville to take control over future development of Rockville Pike.

The Adopted RPNP is designed to take all the various needs that Rockville Pike serves into consideration. Figure 4-5 of the Plan displays a rendering of how the new Pike should look (with Bus Rapid Transit shown in the middle of MD355). In a very forward-thinking move, the City Council changed Rockville zoning requirements so that when strip malls along the pike were renewed every twenty-five years or so, new ones would need to be built 66 feet away from the MD355 curb. This would give Rockville City space along Rockville Pike to build sidewalks, bike lanes and other amenities that would improve the corridor for residents and businesses, including pedestrian, cycling and vehicular transportation.

In another visionary move, the city invited architectural and planning firms to organize a series of charettes and focus groups. Rockville citizens were invited to learn the characteristics of beautiful avenues such as those in Paris, Barcelona and Washington DC from these experts. Focus groups discussed what was great and not-so-great about Rockville Pike and, for the not-so-great aspects, what would be preferred. Participants learned that beautiful and interesting buildings and landscaping dotted with amenities such as lighting, benches, parking and parks that invite relaxing, walking, cycling, and relaxed driving are characteristic of all beautiful boulevards. The idea was to make Rockville Pike beautiful as well as functional. Figure 4-5 is indeed quite beautiful while incorporating all the functions that are needed and wanted for Rockville Pike.

As shown in Figure 4-3, the Rockville Pike redesign would retain the 84' of existing MD355 owned by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). This part would serve as an expressway through Rockville for faster traffic. The 66-foot set back on each side of MD355 belonging to Rockville would devote 13 feet to landscaping, 12 feet to an access road for slower local traffic, 8 feet for parking in front of retail and offices, a three-foot buffer, a ten-foot bike lane, ten more feet of landscaping and a ten-foot sidewalk adjacent to retail and offices.

After discussion, this attractive and highly functional redesign was revised to include possible modifications for especially large redevelopment proposals, called "Champion" Projects. This modification is rendered in Figure 4.5. The difference between Figures 4.4 and 4.5 is that 4.5 has no access road or on-street parking. This modification was made to accommodate narrow swaths of land or development in the South Pike, where "Champion" Projects were anticipated. Champion Projects were conceived to entice large development and speed the process of infrastructure development all along the Pike. This was desirable because it was expected that private developers would implement the redesign according to the design specifications in either Figures 4.3 or 4.5.

In this context, the proposed development at 900 Rockville Pike is extremely concerning. Instead of a 10-foot bike path, 23 feet of landscaping and a 10-foot sidewalk, the developer is proposing a 10-foot sidewalk for both cyclists and pedestrians to share.

The property at 900 Rockville Pike is an unsightly vacant lot that is often ridden with trash. Without doubt, improvement is needed. South of 900 Rockville Pike is a 6-story building which, unlike most of the pike's one-story constructions, will not be recycled every 25 years and is not set back the 66 feet as required for new developments. North of 900 Rockville Pike is Edmonston Drive. Edmonston is one of the few links from MD355 to residential neighborhoods on the east side of Rockville. Already an important commercial center, the MD355/Edmonston intersection would likely become even busier with development at 900 Rockville Pike. In principle, RBAC and RPAC support development on this property.

A ten-foot sidewalk to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists at this hub for commerce, cyclists, and pedestrians clearly violates all design recommendations provided in the RPNP. The mayor and council did not approve the plan and asked staff to work with the developer on revisions. Until the proposal conforms to the design standards of the RPNP, it should not be presented to the council, much less approved.

The RPNP calls for the Rockville City Council is elected to negotiate with developers of Champion projects. Small developments should simply conform to the RPNP design standards. Doing otherwise slows the development process, wastes the time of Council members, increases costs to the city and to the developer, and undermines the integrity of the process. RBAC and RPAC want the council to negotiate on behalf of the long-term interests of the city as laid out in the existing RPNP. Trade-offs, such as allowing higher elevation of buildings in exchange for less parking or more green space are in the plan and should be used. These types of negotiations are appropriate. However, a ten-foot sidewalk shared by cyclists and pedestrians at a busy intersection is no substitute for ten feet of sidewalk, twenty-three feet of landscape and ten feet of protected bike lane.

RBAC and RPAC want the City Council and staff to adhere to the design recommendations adopted in August 1, 2016. The table in the Appendix below shows proposals and decisions that we know of so far. Other appendices show Figures 4.3, 4.5, 4.4, and the specifications for the intersection at MD355 and Edmonston from the RPNP.

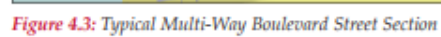
Appendices

Table of Rockville Pike Design Proposals and Disposition

Project Name/Address	Bike/Ped Amenity Proposal	Disposition/Comment
Twinbrook Quarter	Buffered 10-foot-wide bikeway and 20-foot wide landscaped/sidewalk area adjacent to the proposed buildings	Approved by Mayor and Council. Proposal is partially consistent with Figure 4.5, Alternative of Typical Multi-Way Boulevard Street.
460 Hungerford	Interim: 10' wide shared-use path separated from curb by a 9' landscape buffer. When the MD 355 BRT is constructed, the SHA will be required to reconstruct the required MD 355 sidewalk, and within the provided 13' easement area along property frontage with MD 355, the city can require or build the planned 10' buffered cycle track as recommended by the Rockville Bikeway Plan. (email correspondence 7/29/21 in response to RBAC inquiry).	Interim. This project is in the Town Center neighborhood on the west side of Rockville Pike. The development is partially consistent with the RPNP. One concern is how long it will be until BRT is built. A second concern is that, from the description, it appears the design will be consistent with Figure 4.5, Alternative of Typical Multi-Way Boulevard Street. However, this property is neither in the south section of Rockville Pike nor a champion project.
900 Rockville Pike	10-foot sidewalk that cyclists and pedestrians would share	Proposed to council and not approved. This proposal is not consistent with the RPNP.

Figure 4.3, page 4-5 *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*, adopted August 1, 2016

Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan



4-5

Alternative of Typical Multi-Way Boulevard Street Section
(Figure 4.5, page 4-9 *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*, adopted August 1, 2016)

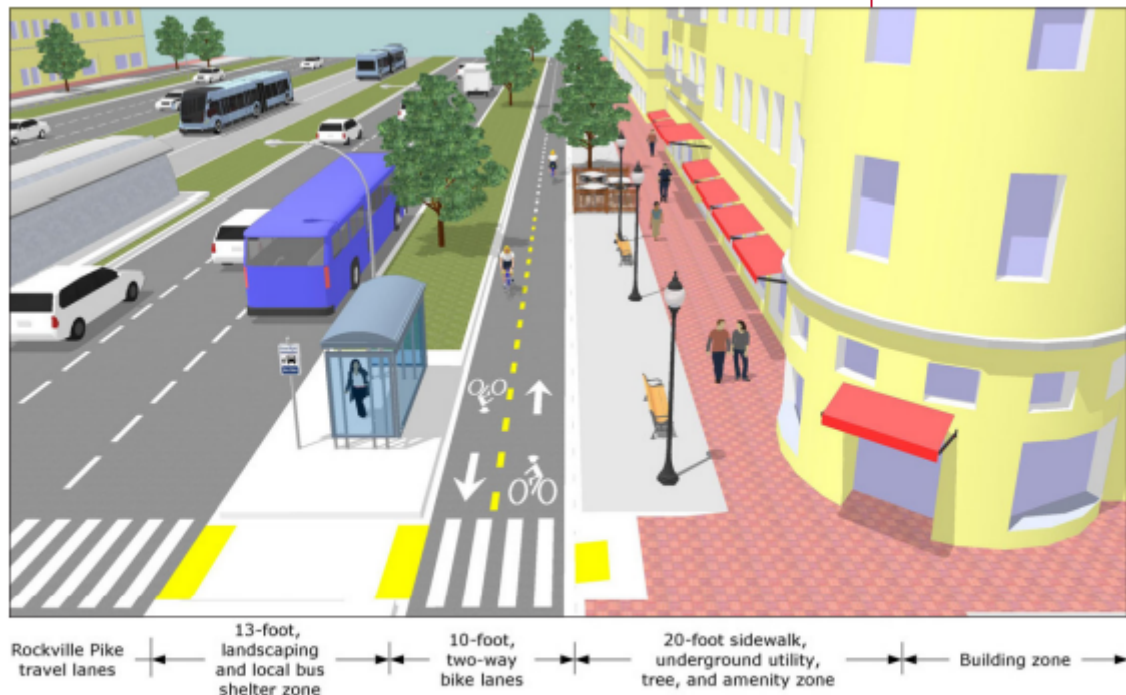


Figure 4.5: Alternative Pike Street Section (Rockville Champion Projects)

Close-up Detail of Typical Multi-Way Boulevard Street Section

(Figure 4.4, detail from Figure 4.3, page 4-5 *Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan*, adopted August 1, 2016)

Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan



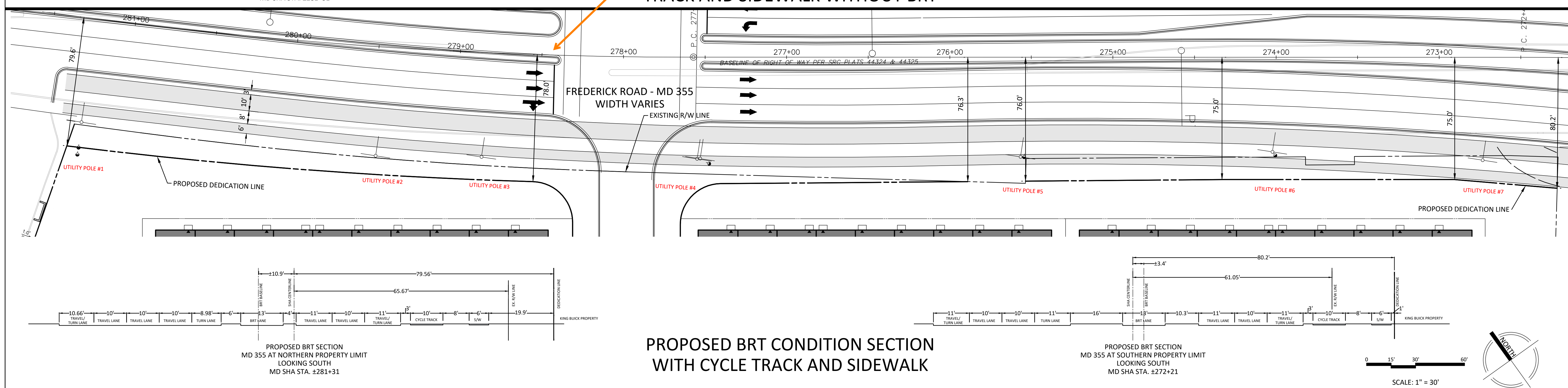
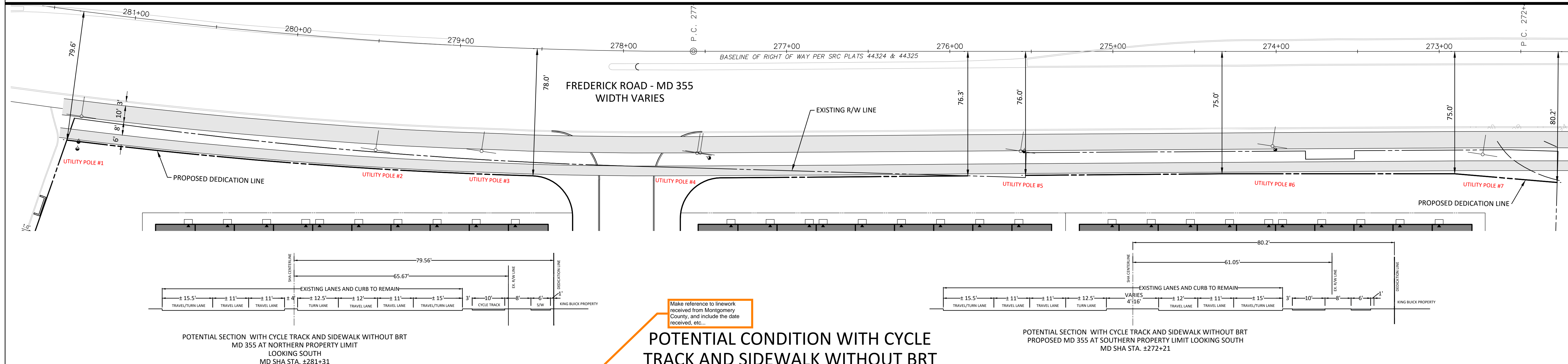
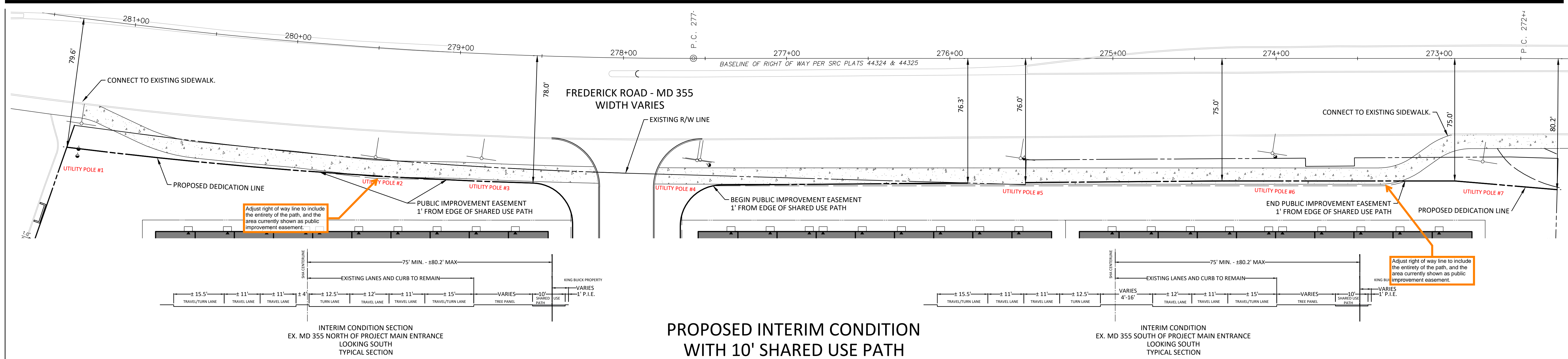
Figure 4.4: Typical Access Road Section Detail.

Specifications for the intersection at MD355 and Edmonston from the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan

The Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan singles out Edmonston Drive. It does not mention the east side and it is not clear why not.

This plan recommends placing emphasis on the treatment of building frontages at strategic intersections: where Rockville Pike intersects with Twinbrook Parkway and Halpine Road, and on the west side of the Pike at Edmonston Drive, Wootton Parkway, and First Street. Buildings at these corners should be chamfered (i.e., cut symmetrically at a 45-degree angle) or otherwise designed to increase the face exposure of corner buildings and to create a larger pedestrian environment (see example, Figure 4.20). These areas can be used for additional landscaping, open air cafes and restaurants, and to mark entryway to shops. Distinctive architecture, artwork, clocks, flags, fountains, unique shops, and other place-making features are encouraged in these locations (page 4-31, Rockville Pike Plan 2016)

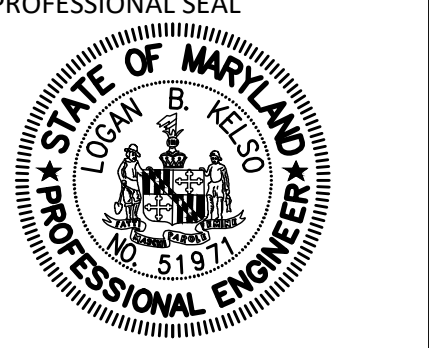
ANNER, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
CIVIL ENGINEER:
RIKA MARYLAND, LLC
1251 CENTURY BLVD.
SUITE 400
BETHESDA, MD 20874
301-916-4100
James Buchheister, RLA
Robert Tilson, FALSA, PLA
Gagan Kelso, P.E.

[illegible]

KING BUICK
4TH ELECTION DISTRICT
MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
MARYLAND
WSSC GRID: 222NW08
WSSC GRID: 221NW08
TAX MAP: GS12

MD 355 R/W
EXHIBIT

PJT2021-00013



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DESIGNED BY: _____
DATE ISSUED: JUN. 1961

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PROJECT VM50420

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D. EXH-1.0

SHEET NO. _____

From: wendya1002@gmail.com,

To: nancy.breen@yahoo.com, sopiesudz@aol.com,

Subject: URL for sending comments re: American Legion Bridge/495/270 expansion

Date: Thu, Aug 5, 2021 10:09 am

The Coalition for Smarter Growth set up a URL with an automated letter. It's pretty easy and will register your opposition. It isn't as good as a personal note, but it is a numbers game especially when you are running for governor. Here is the url. I could send it out to RBAC or you can. It may have more power if it came from you.

<https://secure.everyaction.com/fXiW7Mt1ZUWfRRpI5OxkiA2?emci=341aee70-b7e9-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=163d5a50-58ea-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=8307567>

This is a sample of what I planned to send before I saw this url

Dear Honorable Peter Franchot

The scaled back P3 project to build a new American Legion Bridge and create 2 HOT lanes on the bridge and I270 to I370 is another Hogan folly. It will not relieve the congestion and will make it worse for years while destroying parks, streams, wetlands, and neighborhoods. In the meantime, implementation of real solutions will be delayed while “waiting” for the toll lanes to be completed.

The draft environmental impact statement had significant omissions and flaws. The project has been scaled down because it is so disastrous and ill-conceived. Responsible and good government should know the full fiscal, environmental, and social risks of this project before locking Maryland into a long-term, exclusive contract. You do not want to be on the hook to reimburse the private project developers up to \$50 million taxpayer dollars if the project is canceled for environmental or other reasons. As a member of the Board of Public Works, demonstrate your leadership, fiscal responsibility, and independence from Governor Hogan. I urge you to **VOTE NO** and reject the predevelopment agreement.